

Age Testimony – March 7, 2021

Hello,

My name is Stacey Altomari. My mom is in Apple Rehab Watertown. I am here to testify on her behalf for her safety and sake. One year ago, the doors to my mother's facility were shut tight. It was the worst feeling in the world. It was like having a child stripped from your arms forever. Here's what shutting down LTC's has done.

My mom's mental faculties were starting to decline at that time and now I see a significant decline in her memory and cognitive skills.

She went from using a walker, getting out on visits weekly with one of her 5 children to only sitting in a wheelchair now or sleeping most of the time.

She went from daily visits from one of her 5 children to zero visits.

She went from eating and socializing and being playful to sleeping most of the time.

She gazes at the outside longing to be there. A simple outside visit (even in the cold which she loves) has been denied.

I can't understand how she has less rights than a prisoner. She has done nothing wrong but get old. How did that become a crime with severe punishment? Isolation. Even prisoners in isolation are allowed 1 hour a day outside. She isn't.

Her rights are what is convenient for the Nursing Home. And when you are short staffed and don't want to pay for temporary CNA's it's easier and more convenient to say "it's their right".

She has the right to say in bed if she wants. I'm told.

She has the right to not get dressed if she wants. I'm told.

She has the right to not use her walker if she wants. I'm told.

She has the right to not shower if she wants. I'm told.

But somehow, she does not have the right to sit outside and visit. Which is far healthier than all the other rights the Nursing Home throws in my face daily. Nursing Homes need more accountability and consequences, not less. They are in charge of my mothers' care yet they don't care about my mother. If my mother was at my house and I allowed all these things to transpire I would be held on charges of neglect! Instead, LTC-NH are getting paid to look the other way, give the bare minimum and neglect our loved ones. The State says it's ok!

There are amazing CNA's and Nurses who do care and I am so grateful for their support and their courage to reach out to me and let me know what is going on inside. But since Connecticut gave all these facilities Immunity I can only report and write to people in the hopes someone will be brave enough to slap a fine and hand and make a difference. With no consequences the CNA's and Nurses don't feel safe reporting issues. Why should they, the LTC has immunity – it has no consequences – but the Nurses & CNA's do. LTC facilities should never have immunity- ever!!! It is truthfully saying, "go ahead, do whatever you want, I'll look the other way". There will always be misuse and abuse if there are not HUGE consequences. We need to make a statement and it needs to be a BIG statement!!!! It's time, well beyond time, that we make changes to the care of our Elderly so they are treated with the respect and honor they so deserve! It's time we made LTC-NH accountable and hit them where it hurts the most. Make the fines big enough that it's more feasible and cost effective for the LTC-NH not to do the right thing! If it costs more to hire a staff member than it does to get

a fine for understaffing – why would they hire a staff member? It's not Rocket Science – use your leverage! It's truly not hard to do - but apparently, it's easier to ignore it than to be brave and change it. It's time to be BRAVE! For ALL of US! Past, present and future. Please. This is your chance to make a difference in the lives of so many. Stop procrastinating and take action NOW!

Regards,  
Stacey Altomari  
887 Bunker Hill Avenue  
Waterbury, CT 06708  
475-449-8891

Resident: Mother, Diana Laferriere  
Apple Rehab, Watertown, CT